

VZCZCXRO9222

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHVB #0970 2981404
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 251404Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8264
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ZAGREB 000970

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIAN JOURNALIST DETAINED, RELEASED

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Zagreb police arrested freelance journalist, Zeljko Peratovic, on October 18, and released him the following the day, charging him with posting classified documents to his website. Human rights and media groups and the opposition Social Democratic Party (SDP) quickly protested the arrest. Prime Minister Sanader expressed support for media freedom in the days following. President Mesic characterized the search of Peratovic's apartment as a mistake and said that the case should have been handled differently. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) Zagreb police arrested free-lance journalist Zeljko Peratovic October 18 on charges of revealing state and military secrets on his website, releasing him on October 19. The police seized three computers, a mobile phone, and documents from his apartment. While Peratovic is the subject of a criminal investigation, prosecutors have not decided whether he will be brought to trial. Police are seeking to identify the government officials who allegedly leaked the documents.

¶3. (U) According to Peratovic, the documents in question were already in the public domain and had been on his website for months. One of the documents allegedly had been submitted to the Parliament to substantiate his claim that Croatian intelligence had trailed him as a result of his reporting on the ICTY case against retired General Gotovina. Peratovic claims that newspapers had published the other two documents, which included references to the British Secret Service and meetings between British intelligence and the

SIPDIS
former Croatian Police Chief, Ranko Ostojic.

¶4. (U) Croatian Prime Minister Sanader commented on the case on October 18, announcing that he would request a report from the Minister of Internal Affairs. Sanader expressed full support for media freedoms, declaring that he was always on the side of journalists. On October 22, President Mesic called the police search of Peratovic's apartment a mistake, said that the case should have been handled differently. He said that the police had taken the path of least resistance in investigating the person who had received the classified documents rather than those responsible for the information, and said this was this totally wrong.

¶5. (U) The Zagreb police department announced on October 20 that the head of the criminal investigation department, Darko Dundovic, would assume a new post as the senior professor at the Police Academy. While police deny any linkage between Dundovic's stepping down and the arrest, PM Sanader suggested that Dundovic had been reassigned as a result of the incident.

¶6. (U) The Croatian Journalists Association, the Croatian Helsinki Committee on Human Rights Media Council, Reporters without Frontiers, the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Center for Development of Democracy, and journalists spoke out against the arrest. The Croatian Journalists Association condemned the arrest,

calling it a drastic example of endangering journalistic freedom and argued that the government employees leaking the documents should be investigated, not the journalist who informed the public. The opposition Social Democratic Party called Peratovic's detention an attempt to intimidate the press.

17. (SBU) Comment: While Peratovic's arrest has caused controversy in Croatia, it appears to be an isolated case and not indicative of a pattern to suppress the media. The police and the prosecutor's office have sought to blame each other for the incident. With parliamentary elections just one month away, the GOC would not likely seek to anger the media. At the same time, Peratovic is known for his investigative reporting on war crimes and the intelligence services and certainly has enemies.
BRADTKE